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ABSTRACT

This discussion focuses on the use of appropriate and equitable tests for the screening and placement of language-minority students. It is proposed that evidence on the impact of testing on Hispanics indicates a relationship between testing practices and the benefits derived or not derived from the students' experience with public education. Public school testing programs determine access to special programs, the nature of instruction received, and the degree of segregation under which instruction is received. Test scores are often used to prematurely push students into an all-English curriculum. Labeling and assignment to special programs are seen as limiting student opportunities. It is concluded that the testing program as currently implemented in Texas does not simply provide an objective record of varying student outcomes, but actually contributes to putting students at risk of dropping out. Several areas of future research are suggested, including descriptive statistics of the limited-English-proficient population, district instructional practices and policies, and the success of current state policy. (MSE)

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ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS

Regional Hearing - Education of Hispanics
U.S. Department of Education
April 10, 1990
San Antonio, Texas

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Assessment and the Language Minority Student in Texas

A Changing Context

The issue of equity in testing is of particular relevance today. Knowing what we know about the growth projected for Hispanics in the next decade, it becomes imperative for educators to examine current testing practices and determine areas for future research. This paper examines the new uses of tests, the growing numbers of Hispanics and inappropriate current testing practices.

New Uses of Test Scores

In the last decade the use of test results has expanded to serve varied purposes. Some years ago, teachers used test scores to ensure students' educational success in class. When the federal support for disadvantaged students became a reality, so did the requirement to determine students' eligibility for special instructional programs such as special education, remedial instruction (Chapter I), bilingual education, and gifted and talented. Test scores were used to decide need for the program (entry) and to decide that a need no longer existed (exit).

With the advent of the school reform movement in the early 1980s, policy-makers determined what constituted minimum standards. The state education agencies required students to show mastery of basic skills prior to being promoted, receiving a diploma or being allowed entry into teacher education programs. In these cases, testing served an accountability purpose. According to Airasian (1987), these tests seek to certify the competence of test takers, not to select or place them. State education agencies mandate the tests without allowing any discretion to the local district as to test selection, administration conditions, scoring or passing standards. Often, the scores are the primary or sole piece of information used in decision-making. Madaus (1988) labels such testing programs as high-stakes testing programs.

More recently, test scores have been used to impose sanctions or to reward persons and school systems relative to how well they are meeting the set standards. School officials use test scores to award merit pay, make funding allocations, and certify or de-certify school systems. In Texas, school districts where students score low on the state competency exam (TEAMS) will be reviewed by the state agency (Note 1).

When test results are published in the newspaper by (school district), and when school superintendents compare achievement by school campuses, a pressure situation is created that continues on down (Shepard, 1989). One finds that principals are compiling, comparing and posting results by grade level and by individual teachers. Then one enters teachers' classrooms and finds that teachers are compiling, comparing and posting student mastery by objectives. One sees teachers developing test practice materials and drilling on the nine test items. Commendable as this seems, the unfortunate result is a narrowing of the curriculum (Shepard, 1989). Moreover, test results indicate that teachers have much greater success in teaching the lower thinking skills.

Thus, test scores have an expanded role within school systems, which has grown beyond improvement of an individual's classroom instruction. Administrators use test scores to determine student and teacher competence and to assess program quality. This greater importance impacts on several operations of the school: the curriculum, entry/exit from special programs, and the overall quality of education (Meisels, 1989). Most importantly, the use of test scores to label, categorize and track students impacts very profoundly on students' opportunities for future educational prospects and chances for upward mobility.

While testing intrudes on all students, its impact is more evident and far-reaching for students who are minority, economically disadvantaged and/or limited-English proficient.

Hispanics in Schools

The Hispanic population of the United States is concentrated in five states. Three-fourths of U.S. Hispanics live in California, Texas, New York, Florida and Illinois. (Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1988). Eighty-eight percent live in metropolitan areas.

Additional characteristics of the Hispanic population include: Sixty-five percent are Mexican American. They are young, have a high poverty rate and a high fertility rate. Within this group, one-third of the Hispanics are under age 15 and two-thirds are under age 34. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, three in five Hispanic children live in poverty. In 1985 nearly four of every five Hispanic children living in female-headed households lived in poverty (Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1988). In addition, this group has experienced a rise in the poverty rate, currently at 29 percent. This rate is much higher than the 17 percent rate reported for Whites, which has decreased in the past years.

Moreover, Hispanics comprise the fastest growing minority group in the United States and promises soon to be the largest. Projections are that by the year 2020 the number of Hispanics in the United States will more than double. From 17 million and being 7 percent of the population in 1986, Hispanics will comprise 36 million, or 12 percent in the year 2020. By the year 2046, they are expected to be at 48 million, or 16 percent (U.S. Census Bureau). See Table 1.

A study of dropouts in Texas determined that Hispanics have a 45 percent school attrition rate, with males and females dropping out at the same rate (Robledo et al., 1986). They noted that over one-half (53%) drop out before completing the ninth grade. Furthermore, 85 percent of Hispanic dropouts were native born. Reasons for dropping out included: low academic skills, pregnancy/marriage and a need to work to supplement the family income. See Table 2.

TABLE 1

CURRENT DATA
HISPANICS

Young

- 1/3 under age 15
- 2/3 under age 34

Mexican/Urban

- 65% are Mexican American
- 88% live in metropolitan areas

Poor

- 3 in 5 children -- 40% below poverty level in 1985
- rise in rate - 29 percent

#s Growing

- 1986 = 17 million (7 percent)
- 2020 = 36 million (12 percent)
- 2046 = 48 million (16 percent)

Traditionally Underserved
Still Unserved

A recent study, *The Undereducation of American Youth,* examined the 1980 U.S. Census Bureau statistics. The study documents that Hispanics, Native Americans and Blacks are more likely to be undereducated. Further, researchers determined that young people from non-English language backgrounds are 1.5 times more likely than their English language counterparts to have dropped out. Young people with incomes below the poverty level are twice as likely to be undereducated as those from more advantaged educational backgrounds (Cardenas, Robledo and Waggoner, 1988).

TABLE 2

TEXAS DATA OF UNDEREDUCATED HISPANICS

- 45 percent school attrition rate
- 53 percent dropout before completing 9th grade
- same rate males/females
- 85 percent of dropouts are native born Hispanics
- 60 percent of dropouts -- poverty
- low academic skills, pregnancy/marriage, need to work

While there are many factors which contribute to this low educational level of minorities in general, and Hispanics in particular, recent reports point to the influence of the reform movement with its emphasis on testing. A report prepared for the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation *America's Shame, America's Hope, Twelve Million Youth At Risk*, reported 14 findings; two of these addressed testing. They asserted that more difficult examinations and more rigorous graduation requirements, without accompanying remediation, seem to be aggravating the dropout problem (MDC, Inc., 1988:24). They cite examples in Florida and note that in Indiana the dropout rate reached its lowest level in 1983 (19.4 percent), but had risen to 22 percent in 1986. In Texas, the dropout rate increased by 10 percent the first year following full implementation of House Bill 72 and by six percent the second year (Cardenas, 1989).

Test Impact on Hispanics

The influence of testing is felt more deeply and dramatically when a student is denied a diploma, or fails to master the requisite number of objectives needed for grade

promotion. However tests do not merely record student achievement levels; they also to a large degree determine those low levels.

The Pre-K and K Levels

A Hispanic student may first feel the influence of testing at age four and within a week of enrolling in a Texas public school. To be eligible for participation in the Pre-K program a student must be low income or limited-English-proficient (LEP) (TEA, 1986). School personnel use the Pre-LAS Test to determine language proficiency. His/her score in the English version of the test determines program eligibility. The student's score in the Spanish version determines the instructional program he/she receives. Students scoring higher in Spanish are further scrutinized. If their Spanish level is higher than their English level by at least two levels, students are labeled limited-English-proficient, Spanish dominant (BE1) and must, by law, receive instruction in Spanish. However, if a student scores two levels higher in English than in Spanish, then the student is labeled limited-English-proficient, English dominant (BE 2). For students not showing a difference of at least two levels, the school may use additional information to determine the student's dominant language and, thus, his or her classification.

Several implementation issues may increase the risks of students being misclassified at this early point. First, enrollment in school marks a four-year-old's first departure from the safety of home and into the school, a new and unfamiliar environment. Students must perform new tasks, for which they have had no instruction and no practice. They must view photographs and describe what is happening, or retell a story to a stranger, very often a person other than the child's teacher. Second, it is important to remember that this child's language development is still evolving and that a measurement at the beginning of the year is precisely that: a measurement of language development at a particular time. Unfortunately, once a child is labeled, albeit for a temporary condition,such as language proficiency, this label generalizes and gains permanency. Floretta McKenzie has stated, "We label the person, but it is the condition that places the child at risk." Finally, young children develop at different rates and often experience

sudden growth spurts. These can occur in one or both languages. Yet, once students are classified they retain that label until they exit the bilingual education program and enter an all English program (Texas Education Agency, 1986).

A relevant issue, although separate from the testing issue, relates to teachers' adherence to the time requirements for the Bilingual Education 1 (BE 1) students. Except for English as a second language to be taught for 45 minutes, all other instruction for BE 1 students must be in Spanish. However, in-classroom visitations by IDRA staff to 20 bilingual pre-K classrooms revealed very little use of the home language. The issue of language of instruction will have relevance to testing, however, if in first grade students are tested in a language different from the one they received instruction.

In a more recent development, it appears that the school reform movement's emphasis on academics has filtered down to the early grade levels (Cunningham, 1989; Miesel, 1989). Two or three years ago a few districts began offering a transitional first-grade class for students who had not mastered the essential elements. They were in effect being held back (Note 2). This coming year, schools will begin offering transitional kindergarten programs. Criteria for eligibility in one San Antonio school district rested solely on a student's knowledge of the alphabet (Internal Memorandum, 1989). Those knowing all the letters and their sounds would progress to first grade; those children knowing most of the letters and sounds would be assigned to remedial classes; those knowing about half the letters and sounds would be placed in Chapter 1 classrooms; those knowing only some of the letters would be assigned to the transitional kindergarten class. While the "testing" in this case was done informally, the results will nevertheless have a great impact. Students will be labeled, categorized and placed in a specified instructional program. The children in the transitional classes will be grouped with other children who, like themselves, are minority, poor and limited-English-proficient and segregated from the mainstream.

Similar practices have been reported at the national level. Cunningham (1989) observes an increase in homogeneous grouping, increased entry-age requirements, and increased kindergarten requirements. She reports that the number of children held back to either repeat kindergarten or to be channeled into pre-first-grade classes has increased 67 percent since 1984.

Elementary Grades

At the elementary grades test scores serve three functions: (1) assess student mastery of basic skills, (2) decide student readiness for grade promotion, and (3) determine student eligibility (entry) or ineligibility (exit) from special programs.

Assess Mastery

Language minority students who are assessed to be LEP will be placed in a bilingual education program if there are at least 20 LEP students in any language classification in the same grade level. If a student was previously identified as LEP, he or she continues to receive instruction according to his/her initial classification until exited. New students must be tested within two weeks of enrolling.

In the elementary grades LEP students are required to take the TEAMS test in English unless they receive a waiver. Table 3 is a comparison of the percentage of LEP students, non-LEP, Hispanic and White students in grades 1, 3 and 5 passing all tests in 1987-88. Note that in all three grades levels, LEP students have the lowest passing rate. (Next in ranking averages, you can see where non-LEPs scored higher than the Hispanic). Whereas the Hispanic percentage might have averaged less because both LEPs and non-LEPs are counted there, notice how the percentage for the non-LEP category is so much greater than the LEP. The discrepancy widens at grades 3 and 5 to almost double the passing score of the LEP student. Scores for non-LEPs, which include Whites, Blacks and Hispanics, are closer to those of White students.

TABLE 3

TEAMS RESULTS
1987-88

Grade 1	# of students taking test	% passing all tests
LEP	18,431	61%
Non-LEP	235,668	80%
Hispanic	73,337	71%
White	136,029	86%
Grade 3		
LEP	15,481	35%
Non-LEP	220,331	71%
Hispanic	72,758	59%
White	123,213	78%
Grade 5		
LEP	11,118	30%
Non-LEP	212,640	74%
Hispanic	70,471	60%
White	117,479	82%

This comparison indicates the strength of the relationship between language proficiency and achievement. Cummins (1982), has indicated that students develop basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) rather rapidly but take from five to seven years to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALPS). Similarly, Mace-Matluck (1988) notes that a major shift occurs in the educational process when a student enters fourth grade. In reading, the shift is away from learning to read to reading to learn. Greater demands are placed on students because of longer texts, less control of vocabulary, less directed instruction and more large group instruction.

Table 4 shows results from the Spanish TEAMS administered to Spanish-dominant LEP students. In grade 1, 74 percent passed all tests compared to 61 percent of the LEP students who passed all sections of the English-version of the test. In grade 3, 78

percent who took the Spanish test passed all three sections. Note also that the percentage passing is identical to the score of White students. These scores point to the powerful impact of being tested in a language that the student comprehends and in which he or she has proficiency. In addition, it highlights the difference in scores when students are tested in the language of instruction.

TABLE 4

SPANISH TEAMS RESULTS
1987-88

Grade	# of students taking test		% passing all tests
Grade 1	17,763		74%
Grade 3	4,462		78%
	Converted Scores		
Grade 1	**Mathematics**	**Reading**	**Writing**
LEP	826	749	773
Non-LEP	862	824	850
Spanish Version	856	822	813
Grade 3			
LEP	786	698	688
Non-LEP	851	817	771
Spanish Version	809	823	831

Source: Texas Education Agency, 1988.

Yet, prior to 1987 all TEAMS tests were administered in English. In 1987 the Spanish version was available only for first grade. More recently, testing in Spanish was allowed for third graders new to the district or to bilingual education, and who had previously not been eligible to take the Spanish TEAMS test in first grade. Third grade students not meeting the requirements for exemption must take the TEAMS test in English even when they are classified as being LEP or not fully English proficient.

Grade Promotion

House Bill 72 mandated that students not scoring 70 percent mastery of the essential elements could not be promoted to the next grade level. This has important implications for the language of instruction and for testing. BE 1 students can show mastery in Spanish--of all the essential elements and of the nine objectives tested by TEAMS. Having shown mastery in Spanish, these students will be promoted and not have to show mastery in English until exited from a bilingual education program.

Students categorized as BE 2 (LEP, English dominant) will be taught mostly in English, using ESL techniques except for 45 minutes of instruction in the native language. They must show 70 percent mastery of the essential elements in English because TEA stipulates that students be tested in the language of instruction. Yet the English TEAMS test is the same for the BE 2 and for native English speakers. While BE 2 students receive instruction via ESL methodologies, these methodologies are not used when testing them. Despite this disadvantage, BE 2 students not showing mastery in English of the essential elements will be retained.

In addition, not all LEP students are being served by bilingual or ESL programs. In Texas, 25,964 parental denials were received asking that their children receive all English instruction with no special treatment (TEA, 1989). Similarly a survey by the Chief State School Officers of State Education Agencies revealed that : (1) 25 percent of all LEP students were not being served; (2) no follow-up procedures were in place for exited LEPs; (3) LEP students were being placed inappropriately in Language and Learning Disability (LLD) classes and classes for the speech impaired; and (4) Chapter 1 services did not differentiate instruction for LEP and non-LEP students.

Texas does have follow-up provisions for exited LEP students. However, no data is available on how many students have taken advantage of the re-entry provisions stipulated in the State Board of Education rules. Furthermore, no information is available on the achievement of LEP subgroups. The breakdown of BE 1 and BE 2 students by regions or at the state level is not available from TEA. It would be interesting to see the success rate for transition into an all English curriculum for each of these groups.

Special Program Eligibility

Like other states, Texas schools use tests for determining student eligibility for special programs and services. Similarly, Texas schools show an over-representation of Hispanics in special education classes, most noticeably in LLD classes. Ortiz (1986) documented a 300 percent over-representation of Hispanics in such classes. The expected rate of occurrence of such disabilities within a population is five percent.

On the other hand, there is a disproportionately low inclusion of Hispanics, and particularly LEP students, in classes for the gifted and talented. Of the 4,573 LEP students taking the third-grade Spanish TEAMS, only seven students, or zero percent, were enrolled in gifted and talented classes. Among third graders taking the English TEAMS, one finds the expected five percent enrolled in such classes.

High School

By the time students enroll in high school, they have accumulated an academic record and reached a certain level of development. In high school they are tested with standardized achievement tests as well as with state-mandated minimum competency exams. TEAMS test scores are compiled on student mastery of basic skills at the 7th, 9th and 11th grade. In addition, students who enroll in a school district for the first time are administered a language proficiency test and labeled as LEP or non-LEP. Students' reading levels become central to students' success.

This section describes the low reading scores found among Hispanic students. These tests scores are used by administrators to place students in instructional programs such as English as a second language (ESL) program. Furthermore, test scores are used to assess mastery of basic skills. On the basis of test scores, administrators determine who will be promoted to the next grade level and who will be retained.

More importantly, low test scores also have an unanticipated impact: They track LEP students and underachieving Hispanics into non-college tracks and segregate students from English proficient peers.

Low Reading Scores

At the national level, Durán (1989) examined the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement test scores for 1975, 1980, and 1983 of 9, 13 and 17-year-olds. He found that all age groups showed a steady rise in scores. However, Hispanics scored far below their peers. In 1984, 11th-grade-students scored as follows. Scoring at the adept reading level were: 47 percent Anglo, 27 percent non-language minority Hispanics, and 14 percent language minority Hispanics. (At this level, students can read and understand complicated literary and informational passages.) Scoring at the advanced reading level were: 6.5 percent Anglo, 3 percent non-language minority students and less than 1 percent language minority Hispanics. (At this level students can extend and restructure the ideas presented in specialized and complex texts.)

Curriculum Tracking

Furthermore, Durán (1983) noted how Hispanic high school students earn less Carnegie units for courses taken, do not earn as high academic grades as Anglo and Asian students, and get tracked into non-academic coursework. Orum (1984) documented by the time Hispanics reach their senior year, 73.8 percent are in instructional programs that make college an impossible option. According to Orum's study, 40 percent are in general academic curriculum, 30 percent are in vocational education, and 26 percent are in college preparatory courses. Mingle (1987) notes that nationally only 16 percent of Hispanic high school graduates enter college. In Texas, this percentage is smaller and has diminished in the past 10 years. The Texas Education Agency reports that 14.6 percent of all Hispanic high school graduates enrolled in college in 1977-78 compared to 35 percent of White students. In 1987-88 only 12.5 percent of Hispanic high school graduates enrolled in college compared to 39.2 percent for White students, (Tomás Rivera Center, 1989).

Segregation/Linguistic Isolation

Texas ranks second in the percentage of Hispanic enrollment, with 32.5 percent of its students being Hispanics. The great majority of those students (77.7 percent) attend predominantly minority schools. Furthermore, 40.9 percent of Hispanics currently attend schools with a 90-100 percent minority enrollment (Orfield, Monfort & Aaron, 1989).

Arias (1986) had previously documented racial segregation of Hispanics citing reports by Orfield and others by Orum. She also described how Hispanic students are segregated in schools or classrooms in which LEP students are in the majority. Schools exacerbate the effects of residential isolation by limiting the exposure of some Hispanic students to the native English discourse of peers when they are grouped homogeneously.

LEP middle school students in Texas must enroll in specific ESL and correlated language arts classes. At grade 7 and 8, all LEP students must enroll in special language arts and reading improvement classes for four semesters or until exited. In addition, students at the beginning English level and students without previous schooling receive content area instruction with a teacher using ESL methodology. ESL 2 and ESL 3 students receive the four semesters of ESL--language arts and reading improvement but, for them, the use of ESL methods to teach the content areas is optional. LEP students may select elective units if extended day, summer school or early exiting make these available.

At the high school, LEP students must complete four units of English language instruction (two units may be ESL and the remaining two units from a correlated Language Arts or an English course). Additional ESL courses may be taken for elective credit. Only state electives count toward meeting graduation requirements.

Students who enroll in the special English classes after their freshman year have, in effect have only one diploma option: the regular high school diploma. Unless they enroll in summer school or sign up for an additional year, students identified as LEP do not have the other options.

Differentiated Diploma

Texas offers three diploma options. It offers a regular high school program diploma, an advanced program diploma and an advanced with honors diploma. Graduates receive documentation (the diploma) to show their academic standing to prospective employers. Those students not passing the exit-level TEAMS test will not graduate. However, a school district may opt to allow such students to "cross the stage" and receive a rolled blank piece of paper. TEA has not compiled data on numbers of students completing the twelfth grade but not receiving a diploma.

At the high school level, the lowest percentage of students passing all three tests can be found in two groups: LEP students and students enrolled in school districts with very high percentages of low-income students. At grade 9, 10 percent of LEP students passed all three tests. In districts with over 80 percent of students from low-income households only 40 percent passed all three TEAMS tests.

The percentage of re-tested LEP students not passing the exit level test by May 1988 was 14 percent. Yet LEP students accounted for only three percent of the first-time test takers in October 1987.

Hispanics also were over-represented in the percentage of those having to retake the exit-level test. In October, 1987, Hispanics comprised 40 percent of the students in 12th grade required to retake the exit-level test compared to 29 percent Blacks and 27 percent for Whites. In May 1988, Hispanics again represented 40 percent of the re-tested students in grade 12.

This May, Commissioner of Education William H. Kirby reported that average TEAMS scores for 1988-89 had gone up by four points. Almost immediately following his statement, he announced that 93,000 students had dropped out of school during the 1987-88 school year. Perhaps, there is some relationship between the loss of so many students and the gains made in test scores.

Summary and Implications for Future Research

Summary

The evidence presented on the impact of testing on Hispanics clearly shows a relationship between testing practices and benefits derived or not derived from the students' experience with public education. The testing programs in public schools determine students' access to special programs. Furthermore, test scores determine the nature of instruction received. Obviously, students tested, labeled and assigned to segregated and linguistically isolated classrooms do not receive the same quality education as students not placed in these classes.

In addition, test scores are often used to prematurely push students out of a special program into an all-English curriculum. This is most evident in bilingual education classrooms.

Furthermore, students are placed in a disadvantaged position when they are labeled, assigned to ESL and correlated English classes which in effect foreclose their opportunity for furthering their education beyond high school. More importantly, LEP students classified as English-dominant in elementary, and LEP students in high schools are forced to take the TEAMS test in English--almost assuring their chances of failing this test. These same students must also demonstrate mastery of the essential elements in English, even though they are still technically limited-English-proficient. They are truly at-risk students since this practice increases the likelihood of their being retained another year. It is important to remember that more than one grade retention and its accompanying over-agedness virtually assures that student's chances of dropping out.

In sum, it appears that the testing program as currently implemented is not merely an objective record of varying student outcomes. Rather, the tests themselves contribute to students being at-risk, and they contribute to the student drop out problem among Hispanic students.

Implications for Future Research

Several variables that influence student success rates have been identified. Included among these are characteristics and practices at the school district level such as: 1) the district's use of exemptions from TEAMS testing of LEP students; 2) the district's property wealth and the student services it can provide; 3) the information flow from the state policy makers to district administrators and from administrators to teachers and students; and 4) total minority enrollment in the district. The characteristics of students also greatly influence their success rates. Student variables which can influence success of LEP students tested in English include: 1) student's language dominance; 2) student's reading level; 3) student background knowledge and skills development levels.

During the just completed academic year 296,658 students in Texas public schools were identified as being limited-English-proficient. Aggregate data is available regarding the level of achievement by LEP students in the various grade levels. Furthermore, information is compiled on the achievement of students by enrollment in special programs such as special education and Chapter 1. However, no data is available concerning student achievement by language dominance.

The following questions merit further exploration through much needed research:

- What are the descriptive statistics for LEP students in the elementary grades--the numbers of students classified as BE I, BE 2, BE 3, BE 4 and BE 5?

- What are the success rates of the BE 1 and BE 2 students after being exited from bilingual education programs? Are school districts conducting follow-ups of exited students as mandated by State Board of Education rule? Are those not succeeding in an all-English curriculum re-entered into bilingual programs? What was their language dominance at time of exit?

- Which school districts are taking advantage of the provision that allows LEP students who are very limited in their English skills to be exempted from taking the TEAMS test in English? Which districts are not exempting students and why?

- How does the amount and quality of remedial instruction received differ for students in high minority-low property wealth districts from those students in school districts not having these characteristics?

- What are the reading levels and student educational histories of those students not passing the TEAMS exit level exam?

- What are the reading levels and student educational histories of those students not passing the TEAMS exit level exam?

- The state's current policy and the Time and Treatment Guidelines were passed without any pilot-test data. Do the results bear out the premise reflected in the policy?

RECOMMENDATIONS

In printing their request for proposals and setting criteria for grant awards the U.S. Department of Education needs to examine how it is contributing to inappropriate school practices. By requiring standardized achievement tests to demonstrate program effectiveness, the Department of Education in effect is sanctioning practice that is counter to the desired results.

1. Do not require standardized testing for programs serving preschool children, ages 3 to 5. Use income level data with parent questionnaires about home language, conversations, and/or observation checklists to determine program eligibility. Avoid labeling a student with a specific category.

2. Insure that procedures limit the use of tests as the sole criterion for selection (entry) into a special program or for removal (exit). The Department of Education needs to review provisions listed for entry into bilingual education, preschool, gifted and talented and Chapter 1 programs.

3. The Department of Education should discourage labeling of students and use of deficit model approaches. At the preschool level, it should discourage skills-driven approaches and encourage use of developmentally-appropriate instruction.

NOTES

NOTE 1: On July 14, 1990, The Texas State Board of Education voted to stop schools from holding students back one year in prekindergarten and kindergarten. The board stated that transitional classrooms were tantamount to retention.

NOTE 2: School districts in Texas will begin using the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in the fall of 1990. This test measures student mastery of higher order thinking skills as well as mastery of basic skills.

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